

VZCZCXRO8653
RR RUEHAST RUEHDH RUEHHM RUEHLN RUEHMA RUEHPB RUEHPOD RUEHSL RUEHTM
RUEHTRO
DE RUEHHI #1440/01 3650453
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 310451Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0667
INFO ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 HANOI 001440

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SUBJECT: VIETNAM OK WITH COP 15

REF: HANOI 1246; HANOI 670

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Vietnamese climate change negotiating team is pleased with the results of the Conference of the Parties-15 (COP-15) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Copenhagen and will recommend to the Prime Minister that Vietnam officially support the Copenhagen Accord. A Vietnamese negotiator cited the positive role played by President Obama and noted his satisfaction that the final agreement took into account the positions of a broad swath of countries participating in Copenhagen. Looking forward, the Government of Vietnam (GVN) does not want to see the Kyoto Protocol dismantled, but supports amending the document to require all large emitters, not just developed nations, to commit to specific emission reductions. Further, proposed financing discussed at COP-15 should target the countries most vulnerable to climate change (including Vietnam), as opposed to all developing nations. The state-controlled media was more critical of Copenhagen, but primarily focused on the positive role played by the Vietnamese delegation, and highlighting recent assistance commitments from development partners. End Summary.

Vietnamese Delegation Pleased with Copenhagen

¶2. (SBU) Mr. Pham Van Tan, the Deputy Director General for International Cooperation at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) and a member of the Vietnamese negotiating team at COP-15, told ESTHOff the Copenhagen Accord was a good agreement given the constraints under which the negotiators operated and believed that major economies and emitters reached a basic consensus on initial steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Vietnam understood that the document was not binding but felt that it reflected a necessary first step that will be improved upon through ongoing dialogue. Though the GVN team had departed Denmark prior to the final agreement, they had analyzed the document and are drafting a letter to Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung recommending that Vietnam support the Accord. According to Mr. Tan, Vietnam will then begin corresponding with the UNFCCC Secretariat to detail Vietnam's mitigation actions.

¶3. (SBU) Vietnam felt that most of its goals going into the conference were met and that Vietnam succeeded in raising its profile at the conference. Prime Minister Dung met with 11 other heads of state and international organizations, other high ranking GVN delegation members had another 20 policy-level meetings during the conference and that Dung received an excellent timeslot for his speech to the assembly. Though Vietnam did not have any specific goals for financial commitments at the COP-15, Tan felt that potential donors acknowledged the need to provide monetary and technical support. For example, the Prime Minister, the MONRE Minister and the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development will attend a bilateral discussion with the Netherlands in early 2010 to detail technical and financial assistance.

Praise for President Obama and

Request for Additional Cooperation

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¶4. (SBU) Tan praised the role of President Obama and noted that U.S. leadership was crucial to reaching a final agreement. MONRE Minister Pham Khoi Nguyen, the Deputy Head of Vietnam's delegation, was pleased that he had the opportunity to meet with high-level members of the U.S. delegation. Vietnam hopes the United States will follow up on Nguyen's request to build on existing U.S.-Vietnamese climate change cooperation, such as the Delta Research and Global Observation Network (DRAGON) Institute at Can Tho University and the U.S.-Vietnam Climate Change Working Group announced during the Prime Minister's 2008 visit to the United States, and would assist Vietnam to strengthen its hydro-meteorological capacity to better respond to climate change. The GVN also welcomed U.S. assistance at internal GVN meetings early in 2010 to review and modify the Vietnamese approach to international negotiations.

Vietnam Sees Less G-77 Solidarity

¶5. (SBU) The Vietnamese delegation felt that the G-77 umbrella now included countries with varied opinions on climate change responses and the mitigation responsibilities of each nation. While Vietnam had participated in two years of preparatory meetings with the G-77, it did not feel that it had to follow the guidance of China, India or other large developing nations. Similarly, while Vietnam worked closely with other ASEAN members in preparation for COP-15 and at the conference itself, it understood that each country had its own position and that no single member could speak for ASEAN.

Vietnam Wants All Large Emitters
to Commit to Emission Reductions

¶6. (SBU) Moving forward, Vietnam would like to see more details and clarity in the agreement reached in Copenhagen and for the Accord to become binding. Additionally, Vietnam strongly supports the continuation of the Kyoto protocol and opposed what Vietnam viewed as efforts by some countries, including Japan, to scuttle it. At the same time, Vietnam will seek to amend Kyoto annexes to require

developed countries to agree to deeper emission cuts and for all major greenhouse gas emitters, not simply developed countries, to commit to emission reductions. Vietnam will also focus its efforts on ensuring that the financing agreed to at Copenhagen targets the nations most vulnerable to climate change, including Vietnam. Large developing nations with adequate financial resources should not have access to these funds.

Media Less Positive on COP-15,

Focuses on Vietnam's Contributions

17. (U) Vietnam's state-controlled media has been rather muted in its coverage of Copenhagen, possibly because the Prime Minister has yet to formally approve the country's position. Instead, local media has largely printed excerpts from foreign outlets focusing on

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international opinions of the negotiations and final agreement. Print reports noted the inability of many countries to move beyond their parochial interests and stated that the final Accord was somewhat disappointing after two years of negotiations. At the same time, the domestic press highlighted the positive role played by Vietnam at the negotiations and the global recognition Vietnam received as a nation at the forefront of the fight against climate change. In the days following the conclusion of the conference, reports stressed recent commitments from development partners, such as Denmark the Netherlands and Japan, to assist Vietnam's climate change efforts, while noting potential U.S. cooperation.
Michalak